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Letter dated 4 December 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In paragraph 63 of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/58/546-S/2003/1053), it is reported:

> "The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and its allied Local Defence Units (LDUs) recruit and use children. UPDF has also recruited children who have escaped or been rescued from LRA. In a UNICEF/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs screening, 120 recruits in the UPDF Lugore military training camp were reported to be children under the age of 18, some of whom had been demobilized."

The report also lists in annex II the Uganda People's Defence Forces and local defence units allied to UPDF as parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in armed conflict.

We would like to bring it to your attention that what is stated in paragraph 63 and annex II as outlined above is absolutely not true. It is Uganda policy, which is well known even to UNICEF, not to recruit anyone under 18 years of age into Uganda armed forces including Local Defence Units. If people sneak into recruitment because of lack of proof of age like birth certificates, and they are found out, they are thrown out. For example, this was done in conjunction with UNICEF in August this year at Lugore training camp in Gulu where LDUs were being recruited.

It is a fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has never visited Uganda despite numerous invitations by the Government of Uganda to do so. The children in northern Uganda, where he hails from, have been abducted, sexually abused and killed by the vicious terrorist group known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Yet despite these widely publicized atrocities, for reasons best known to himself, the Special Representative has not been moved to visit northern Uganda. It is unfortunate that he has chosen to rely on second-hand information which turns out to be false and based on hearsay.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Francis K. **Butagira**
Permanent Representative

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